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Senate Panel Probes Leak on CIA Actions Against Kadafi

From a Times Staff Writer

WASHINGTON—The Senate Intelligence Committee, angered by a news article that disclosed CIA plans to undermine Col. Moammar Kadafi's government in Libya, is investigating the source of the news leak and the panel's own guidelines for protecting classified information, committee officials said Tuesday.

Sen. Patrick J. Leahy (D-Vt.) said he and the Senate panel's chairman, David Durenberger (R-Minn.), are searching for the source of a Nov. 3 Washington Post report stating that the Reagan Administration had approved a secret CIA operation to "disrupt, preempt and frustrate" Kadafi's subversive and terrorist operations.

The probe, begun shortly after the article appeared, is aimed solely at the Senate committee's own policies for handling classified information and not at news leaks by the White House, a committee official said later. The investigation is expected to be completed soon.

Leahy, vice chairman of the committee, told the Woman's National Democratic Club that he has "strongly recommended to the President that the Administration . . . clean up its act" by shutting off deliberate leaks of classified material to the media. Many of the news leaks, he said, are planted by officials seeking to thwart government policies they do not support.

Although President Reagan has complained frequently about news leaks, Leahy contended that the disclosures have grown to "horrendous" proportions under Reagan's tenure and that much material is leaked "long before we see it" on Capitol Hill.

In an earlier speech to the Democratic women, Leahy said the nation's military and spying secrets could be best protected by streamlining the procedures for classifying information and not by passing new laws against disclosure. Most of the 20 million documents now stamped secret every year actually contain innocuous information, he said, so that the leaking of classified material has come to be viewed as routine instead of a violation of the law.

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